

2017 Season of Lent

For centuries Christians have observed the Lenten season by:

- 1 increased study of the Scriptures
- 2 intentional times of extended prayer and fasting
- 3 focus on acts of compassion and charity
- 4 awareness of personal & corporate humility, repentance.

The Lenten season is a demanding and challenging adventure, but there is no need to fear. We have many companions along the way. Our course is familiar, well-traveled and well-marked. Followers of Jesus have invested in this journey since the early fourth century. Lent calls the church from varied denominations, cultures and histories to enter our common story, and take our place following behind our common Lord. We rest assured our Guide is trustworthy!

The journey began Wednesday, March 1st and continues for 40 days leading to Holy week and Easter. (Sundays are excluded from the 40 day count because they are days of rest and celebration.) The 40 days are significant because they're intended to resemble Jesus' time spent in the wilderness (Mark 1:12-13) in preparation for His ministry to our world. Jesus' preparation becomes a key element in our preparation for spiritual development and growth for ministry.

The word, 'lent' comes from the Old Saxon word for 'spring' which conjures up appropriate images of planting, restoration, revival and renewal. Spring provides opportunity to prepare for rebirth, growth and maturity. Lent is a season of preparation.

"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Philippians 3:10

Paul is not alone in his desire to know Christ, to participate in His life, to experience His power, and to realize His resurrection. This desire for close, personal, intimate relationship with Jesus is what drives the church to follow her Messiah all the more closely through the days leading up to Easter. Jesus said, *"If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me,"* Matthew 16:24. We join together in following the One Who denied Himself and shouldered His cross all the way to Calvary.

Almighty and everlasting God,

You breathed into the dust of earth the very breath of life and created us for close, personal, intimate fellowship with You. In our sinfulness and weakness we broke that fellowship and set out on our own path - a path that led to emptiness, dissatisfaction and death. But You brought our full redemption through Your Son, Our Savior, Jesus the Christ. In love He restored us to fellowship with You. Assist us who struggle with sin and weakness, by Your grace, to follow You in close proximity—that we may know You in the power of Your resurrection, and in the intimate sharing of Your sufferings so we might become like You in Your death—in order to receive from You the resurrection to eternal life we pray in Jesus Name - Amen.

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